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Letter dated 7 August 2017 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly

The High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, has submitted to me the ninth annual report on the Alliance of Civilizations, highlighting its main activities from January to December 2016, in accordance with the strategic review document for 2013–2018.*

I am pleased to learn that more partners are supporting the Alliance, and I hope that Member States of the Group of Friends of the Alliance will regularly support it to the fullest extent possible, including through contributions to the voluntary trust fund. Only through predictable and sufficient contributions to the trust fund can the Alliance continue its important work.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present report to the attention of the members of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

* The report is being issued in the language of submission only and without formal editing.

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2016 ANNUAL REPORT

UNITED NATIONS ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS (UNAOC)

UNAOC Annual Activity Report 2016

The present report reflects the main activities and projects carried out by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) between January and December 2016.

The activities were developed and implemented in compliance with approved UNAOC Strategic Review and Plan 2013-2018.

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I. UNAOC Policy Advocacy & Outreach

KEY ADVOCACY INITIATIVES TO ADVANCE UNAOC GOALS

During the reporting period, UNAOC, under the leadership of the High Representative, developed its advocacy activities and outreach program under the following themes:

1. Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue

Building on its mandate as a soft power tool, UNAOC sponsored the Summit of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Middle East on 15 November 2016 and initiative of the Government of Spain. The Summit concluded with the signing of the "Declaration of the Spain Summit for Religious Peace in the Middle East".

The summit brought together more than twenty religious leaders of the most senior influential religious figures from the Middle East, particularly from the Palestinian territories and Israel, to engage in interreligious dialogue in support of tolerance and mutual respect and to voice their rejection of extremist ideologies. Key players who have been skeptical or opposed to peace in the Middle East were invited to engage in the dialogue for peace.

At the conclusion of their two-day meetings , the religious leaders agreed on the Declaration of Spain Summit for Religious Peace in the Middle East, in which they emphasized their responsibility as religious leaders representing the three faiths to promote mutual respect among their people and a life of peaceful co-existence based on justice and safety. They called on the cessation of incitement and misrepresentation and distortion of the image of the other.

As in past years, UNAOC hosted the Interfaith Harmony Week event on 4 February 2016. This event focused on "Implementing the Transformative Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals". It was organized along with the Committee of Religious NGOs at the UN Headquarters.
On 6 May 2016, the High Representative outlined the crucial role played by religious leaders and faith organizations in achieving peace during the High Level Meeting on Religions for Peace. This event was co-organized by the President of the UNGA and the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to the UN at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

UNAOC co-sponsored the High-Level International Consultation with Religions for Peace held in Tokyo on 12 May 2016. The theme of the event was "Partnering with Religious Leaders in the Middle East in Advancing the Protection of Minorities in Muslim Majority States".The meeting brought together Sunni and Shiite religious leaders and other religious denominations who engaged in a constructive dialogue. The outcome was the adoption of a Plan of Action that recommended the following :

- Identifying the authentic religious teachings within each respective religious tradition that provide a basis for robust notions of citizenship for all communities;
- Undertaking informal and formal education within their respective religious communities about the above noted religious teachings;
- Working respectfully with relevant state authorities in Muslim majority states to help ensure that national legal codes for citizenship and human rights for all communities are harmonized with the teachings contained in the Marrakesh Declaration and consistent with contemporary international standards, and
- Initiating concrete cooperative action among their communities to advance inclusive citizenship for all.

Later that month, the Alliance participated in the First "International Conference on Preventive Diplomacy in the Mediterranean" hosted by the Spanish government on 29-31 May in Spain. The High Representative stressed the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue as a way of solving problems and easing tensions between communities, cultures and religions.

UNAOC was also invited to give a lecture on Interreligious Dialogue and Peace-building at the El-Escorial Summer School. This School was hosted by the Complutense University of Madrid (CUM) and King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) on 14 July 2016. This is part of UNAOC outreach efforts and engagement with partners who share the common objective of advancing intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

The Alliance also participated in the Conference on "Freedom for Religion or Belief: Promoting peaceful coexistence through Human Rights" on 8 November 2016. The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) in Rome organized this conference. The event served as an opportunity for the High Representative to highlight the power of religion for unifying people of different cultures.

- **Youth and education**

  On 3 March 2016, together with the Italian Diplomatic Academy, UNAOC celebrated the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations at the UNHQ in New York. Under the title "United Nations: 70 Years of Successes and Challenges", the event aimed to empower youth in international affairs.

  On 7 April 2016, UNAOC also participated in the 3rd Annual Positive Economy Forum in San Partignano. This Forum addressed root causes of social inequalities. It provided young people suffering from drug addiction with education and training to prevent marginalization and exclusion, enabling them to build a better future.

On 13 May 2016, UNAOC welcomed a group of graduate students from the University of Bridgeport (Connecticut) and presented the Alliance's activities at the UN Headquarters in New York. The students were divided in three groups: Global Development and Peace, Global Media and Communications Studies, East Asia and Pacific Rim Studies.

- **Racism and xenophobia**

On the margin of the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, UNAOC organized a side event in preparation for the High Level Summit on Refugees and Migrants.

The side event, titled "Combating xenophobic language in the media and fostering inclusive integration of migrants and refugees" was held on 15 September 2016 at the UN Headquarters in New York. The side event was co-sponsored by the European Union (EU), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Malta to the United Nations.

On 30 September – 1 October 2016, the High Representative addressed the question of racism and the spread of hate speech online at the 14th Rhodes Forum. The Forum's theme was "The Chaos of Multiplicity: An Urgent Call for Dialogue". It was convened by the World Public Forum Dialogue of Civilizations Founder and organized by the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute in Greece.

- **Migration**

UNAOC participated in the panel discussion on "Migrants in the Media: Improving Public Perceptions" at the 14th Annual Coordination Meeting on International Migration held during 25-26 February 2016. This meeting was held in response to the UNGA Resolution 58/208 (2004) on international migration and development. The meeting tracked progress made regarding migration-related commitments contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. It also served as an opportunity to discuss the contribution of relevant intergovernmental bodies and forums to the follow-up and review of the migration-related goals and targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

UNAOC took part in the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Conference on "Promoting Migrant Integration and Combating Xenophobia". IOM organized this conference in partnership with the Permanent Missions of Canada and South Africa to the United Nations on 2 June 2016. The conference provided representatives of Permanent Missions, UN agencies, civil society and other stakeholders with a platform to gain knowledge on current migration issues. They shared experiences, lessons learned and policy solutions to foster integration of migrants into host communities.

In 2016, the Alliance strengthened its cooperation with the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) by becoming an official observer of the Forum. UNAOC participated as a speaker in Roundtable 2.1 on "Migration, diversity, and harmonious society" at the 9th GFMD Summit held in Dhaka (Bangladesh) from 10 to 12 December 2016. The panel was chaired by Morocco and Greece. The panel included the Republic of Moldova, the United Nations Human Security Unit, the United Nations Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

UNAOC participated in the UNGA High-Level Summit to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants on 19 September 2016 at the United Nations Headquarters. The High Representative addressed the issue of narratives of hatred against migrants and refugees at the Roundtable on "Global Compact for responsibility sharing for refugees and respect for international law". The Alliance was actively involved in the Summit's discussions and preparations, including the communication campaign.

- **Preventing Violent Extremism**

On March 2016, the Alliance participated as a strategic partner in the 5th International Government Communication Forum (IGCF) held in Sharjah (United Arab Emirates), under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohamed Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah. The High Representative took part in the high-level session on "Confronting Extremism: Government Communication and the Creation of a Humanist Culture." The Alliance also organized two workshops: one on the impact of UNAOC Programs on promotion of tolerance and diversity involving youth worldwide, the other one on the "Prevention of Violent Extremism and Hate Speech: Sharing Good Practices in the Use of Social Media".

The Alliance of Civilizations and the Turkic Council co-organized an international conference on "The Role of Youth in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Holistic Approaches, from Education to De-radicalization" in Istanbul during 20-21 October 2016. The Conference built on the provisions of UN SC Resolution 2250 (2015) recognizing the critical role young people play in building peace, and the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE). It served as a platform for young leaders to exchange experience and knowledge on issues related to PVE and to build South-South and Triangular partnerships. In this context, UNAOC organized a panel discussion on the role of youth in preventing violent extremism through education in partnership with young society leaders and civil society, including the NGO Search For Common Ground.

UNAOC participated in a symposium entitled: "Internet and the Radicalization of Youth: Preventing, Acting and Living Together" organized by UNESCO in partnership with the Government of Quebec and with the support of the Government of Canada. Held from 30 October to 1 November 2016, the conference brought together

researchers, experts, civil society representatives, the private sector, and government officials to identify collaborative projects at the national and international level to prevent radicalization of youth. UNAOC presented its #SpreadNoHate initiative in a panel discussion titled, "Hate Speech, Extremist Propaganda, Freedom of Expression, Internet and Media". The panel included representatives from UNESCO, the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF), the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), and the Council of Europe.

Under the framework of the 2016 Fellowship Program focusing on the "Education as a Tool for the Prevention of Radicalization and Xenophobia", UNAOC and the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN invited 15 Fellowship Alumni from Europe, North America, the Middle East, and North Africa to share recommendations on the prevention of radicalization and xenophobia, as well as good practices at grassroots level through education on 15 December 2016. The recommendations were formulated in line with the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) and UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015).

- **Music/Art**

The UN Alliance of Civilizations believes that art and sport constitutes valuable tools to promote intercultural dialogue and bridge cultural divides. In 2013 the High Representative declared his intent to expand programming to include arts, sports and entertainment.

In this context, the High Representative participated in the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the World Culture Festival organized by the Art of Living Foundation in New Delhi during 11-12 March 2016. The Concert served as an opportunity to promote intercultural dialogue, diversity and social inclusion.

Later that month, UNAOC took part in the launch of the "Unite in Diversity: World Civil Society India Chapter" and the opening of its peace garden organized by the Shahani Group and Global Dialogue Forum.

In July 2016, UNAOC and the ONUART Foundation hosted the Mediterranean Concert in Geneva under the theme "Encounter of Mediterranean Cultures speaks for itself". The concert's purpose was to reaffirm the power of music to break cultural barriers.

UNAOC co-sponsored a concert to celebrate Human Rights Day at the UNHQ in Geneva. The High Representative believes in the power of music and the arts as soft power tools promoting diversity, peace, cultural understanding. With that in mind, no one would have been a better choice than Concert was led by Daniel Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra which was designated by the UNSG as a Global Advocate for Cultural Understanding.

2. Outreach and Communication

In 2016, UNAOC worked actively on its visibility, engaging its followers on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn, and Snapchat. The number of UNAOC followers increased steadily and rapidly on all platforms, and currently totals more than 105,000. The Alliance also regularly supports campaigns of other United Nations agencies, particularly when they pertain to its four main pillars.

UNAOC continued to work dynamically on its digital communications strategies to maximize the visibility of its various programs and activities to ensure greater impact. This work has proved successful, as millions of people have been reached through the Alliance social media effort. Key social media trending events in 2016 included the Global Forum in Baku, Azerbaijan in April during the #SpreadNoHate symposia where UNAOC was regularly trending on Twitter.

In addition, UNAOC's digital assets continue to enjoy an increase in page views and impressions. Its main website, www.unaoc.org, as well as its multiple subdomains, are highly ranked in all major search engines and are visited by hundreds of thousands of users per month.

3. Institutional Development

- **UNAOC GROUP OF FRIENDS (GOF)**

  Members of the Group of Friends (GoF) continued to provide guidance on key issues and strategic directions for the Alliance through bilateral consultations, group discussions and meetings. As of December 2016, UNAOC Group of Friends included 146 members, among which are 120 countries and 26 international organizations.

  The High Representative continued his effort to broaden the composition of the Group of Friends. Invitations to attend UNAOC events and observe meetings of the GoF continue to be sent to UN Member States not currently in the Group.

  UNAOC is in regular contact with its network of focal points. The focal points oversee implementation of the Alliance's objectives at the national level, including through national plans, and to coordinate with the Secretariat.

  The Group of Friends met twice at the Ambassador level on 6 April and 29 June 2016 in New York, and once at the Ministerial level on 23 September 2016. The meetings at the Ambassador level focused on the 7th UNAOC Global Forum held in Azerbaijan (Baku) during 25-27 April 2016.

  The Ministerial Group of Friends meeting was held in the margins of the 71st session of the General Assembly under the theme "Countering Xenophobia Through Fostering

Inclusive Dialogue". The UN Secretary General, the President of the General Assembly and the Foreign Ministers of Spain and Turkey, cosponsors of UNAOC all attended the Ministerial meeting. The discussions were built on the outcome of the UNGA High-Level Summit On Refugees and Migrants, and aimed at identifying the best means to foster inclusive dialogue to prevent and counter xenophobia.

- **UNAOC HIGH REPRESENTATIVE'S ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The High Representative continued the process of building his Advisory Council. He has extended his initial list of invitations to individuals from the policy, religious, academic, business and arts/entertainment sectors. The Council will advise the High Representative on all issues related to the UNAOC mandate.

- **PARTNERSHIPS**

UNAOC continued to engage with departments and entities within the UN System, in particular with the Department of Political Affairs (DPA). The Alliance took part in CTITF Inter-Agency processes and working groups, and participated in the implementation of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. UNAOC also contributed to UN communication strategies to counter extremist narratives.

The Alliance also strengthened its collaboration with the Department of Public Information. UNAOC worked with DPI on its "Together initiative" aiming at countering racism and xenophobia against migrants and refugees.

UNAOC also consolidated its partnership with the business community, in particular with BMW Group through the Intercultural Innovation Award (IIA). Launched in 2011, the Intercultural Innovation Award is the result of a unique public-private partnership between UNAOC and the BMW Group. This public-private model of collaboration creates deeper impact, as both partners provide their respective expertise to maximize impact.

In 2016, the Alliance developed a series of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the following partners: the China Art Gallery of Nationalities, the Foundation alliance of Civilizations, the Constantinian order, the Global Dialogue Foundation, and Fordham University.

> *"In our centenary year, the BMW Group is particularly emphasizing our focus on the future and innovative solutions to the challenges of tomorrow. We take great pleasure, together with UNAOC, in fostering the development of initiatives that share our pioneering spirit."*
> *Bill McAndrews, Vice President of Communications Strategy, Corporate and Market Communications, BMW Group*

II. UNAOC 7th Global Forum

The Seventh UNAOC Global Forum was held in Baku (Azerbaijan) during 25-27 April 2016. It was organized in close collaboration with the Government of Azerbaijan under the theme: "Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and A Goal". The Baku Forum was structured around two plenary sessions: "Platforms and Partnerships for the Prevention of Violent Extremism" and "Good Practices in Social Inclusion", and parallel breakout and networking sessions. The breakout sessions addressed a broad range of issues, including migration, multiculturalism, media, hate speech, the role of women and religious leaders in promoting peace and peace-building, as well as global education. The Forum kicked off with a Youth event.

1. Platforms And Partnerships for the Prevention of Violent Extremism

Plenary session 1 was dedicated to advancing platforms and partnerships for preventing the scourge of violent terrorism. The Alliance of Civilizations recognized the damage caused by violent extremism, which divides peoples and fractures societies, impeding social inclusion and sustainable development.

This panel brought together Ministers and former national leaders who shared their expertise and good practices on issues related to Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE). After reviewing the various drivers of violent extremism, the panelists acknowledged the failure of military policies as an approach to counter extremism and terrorism. They also emphasized the failures of economics and finance in creating conditions that are conducive to terrorism and extremism. Panelists underlined the importance of dialogue and governance at local, regional and international levels to prevent and counter violent extremism. They expressed their conviction that working together to prevent violent extremism was one of the biggest challenges today.

The session resulted in concrete recommendations to prevent violent extremism, such as the adoption of global initiatives. These included regional growth strategies and the strengthening of State institutions to implement them. The recommendations extended to the creation of platforms, where religious leaders can exchange their experiences and where the media would promote a positive image of religions. All the panelists agreed on the importance of the role of the Alliance of Civilizations in preventing violent extremism. They emphasized the need to work closely with women, youth, civil society, media, religious leaders, as well as the private

sector to that end. This is particularly relevant as UNAOC efforts in the above areas are important contributions to the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

2. Promoting Good Practices For Social Inclusion

Panellists referenced global challenges that industrialized and developing countries are facing, including low youth employment rates and migratory pressures. They shared examples of good practices in social inclusion as well as key imperatives to promote it. These key measures included establishing public private partnerships and providing inclusive education, especially for marginalized and disadvantaged groups such as orphans and children living with disabilities. They called for empathy and compassion towards refugees and internally displaced persons in order to put an end to human suffering and resolve conflict.

Panellists deplored the practice of some political parties to develop electoral platforms on the basis of belonging to certain identity groups. They insisted on making a just economic and social agenda a priority, with a focus on the most marginalized segments of society. They also recommended the application of a human rights-based approach. Best practices for social inclusion in industrialized and developing societies were also shared in the course of the discussion. References were made to examples of initiatives supporting the development of small and medium enterprises in Africa. One example involved coaching and training of budding entrepreneurs, in partnership with local universities, aimed to contribute to sustainable development in Africa by retaining young talent on the continent.

Panellists recalled the UNAOC mandate to promote and develop dialogue and understanding between cultures, civilizations and religions. They also recognized the good practices of the Alliance of Civilizations in fostering social inclusion. They concluded by stressing the importance of implementing the Baku Declaration through a concrete set of applicable recommendations that can be applied locally.

3. Recognizing Youth as agents of change for inclusive societies

The Forum kicked off with a Youth Event and concluded with the adoption of the "Baku Declaration".

- **THE YOUTH EVENT: UNAOC EMPOWERS YOUTH THROUGH THE "NARRATIVES OF TOMORROW"**

  A unique international opportunity for civic and intercultural participation of young people, the Youth Event was conceived as a preparatory process for the 7th UNAOC Global Forum. Preceded by a two-month online phase, it sought to maximize youth's experience of the Forum. It also prepared them to contribute to the discussions and outcomes of the Forum through specific sessions and activities. The event also helped

facilitating learning, sharing and partnership building among young people and other Forum participants.

150 youth from around the world were selected from over 6,000 applications to participate in the Youth Event at the 7th UNAOC Global Forum.

The selected participants were affiliated with youth-led organizations and networks from 110 countries. They demonstrated strong commitment to the Forum theme and focused on fostering social inclusion, intercultural dialogue and promoting peace at local, regional and international levels.

For the 7th UNAOC Global Forum, the Youth Event introduced new elements to its methodology and objectives. These included introducing the "Narratives of tomorrow for living together in inclusive societies" as the main outcome to be developed by the youth participants.

The Youth Event served as a platform to provide young participants with the opportunity to share their experiences and interact with key stakeholders and experts. They were also able to voice their ideas and objectives through the "Narratives of tomorrow", which were disseminated after the Forum.

High-level speakers, including the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations and the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, attended and engaged with participants.

The "Narratives of tomorrow for living together in inclusive societies" aimed to deconstruct stereotypes, to challenge the dominant discourses and to create space for new stories, ideas and norms to flourish.

While the "Narratives of tomorrow" draw particular attention to the challenges that the World is facing, the main focus was on providing a compelling alternative for countering polarization and exclusion. They also promote concrete steps to take and examples of initiatives to expand in order to realize this transformative vision. The narratives built on the positive contributions that youth are already making towards a more just and peaceful world. The outcome highlighted the need to include more youth at all levels of political decision-making, including in peace negotiations and processes.

Youth participants welcomed the success of the Youth Event. They engaged in an online follow-up process to promote the "Narratives of tomorrow", expand their audience, as well as launch campaigns and joint collaborations.

Youth commitment and achievements were also recognized during other discussions and sessions throughout the Forum, such as the UNAOC Alumni Breakout session.

- **Rewarding Youth Achievements Towards Social Inclusion and Sustainable Development At The Intercultural Innovation Award (Iia) Ceremony**

The Intercultural Innovation Award (IIA) developed by UNAOC in partnership with the BMW Group supports grassroots initiatives that promote intercultural dialogue.
During the IIA ceremony, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and BMW Group announced the ten Intercultural Innovation Award recipients for 2016.

The first prize went to the NGO "Give Something Back to Berlin" for its urban integration platform. The platform strengthens the cohesion of the Berlin community by connecting new Berliners with organizations active in social engagement and community services. As of December 2016, skilled volunteers from over fifty nationalities are participating in vibrant projects throughout the city. The projects create meeting points for different communities that would otherwise stay isolated from one another.

Other awardees include "Unistream" (Israel), an initiative that creates social change by empowering teens from underprivileged communities to build and run their own start-ups. Another awardee, " Red Dot Foundation – Safecity" (India) focuses on crowd sourcing personal stories of sexual harassment to make public spaces safer for all.

Among the selected projects, the "Coexist Initiative" (Kenya) was recognized for its engagement with men, boys and communities to address the socio-cultural stereotypes and conditions that impede girls' education. The project "Shine a Light" (Brazil/USA) that teaches indigenous children to share their stories through digital arts also caught the attention of the jury.

The remaining five recipients include "the Blessing Basket Project" (USA), "the International Council for Cultural Centers – Bakers without Borders" (Bulgaria), "On Our Radar" (United Kingdom), "Routes 2 Roots" (India) and "SINGA" (France).

The selected initiatives will receive expert mentoring and resources from the BMW Group and UNAOC over the course of a year. In addition to receiving a grant, the finalists will have the opportunity to participate in training activities, as well as to become a part of the exclusive "Intercultural Leaders" network.

- **Assessing UNAOC's Impact on Youth through the Alumni Breakout Session**

> *"Thanks to UNAOC, we have helped young people become agents of peace. We would like to thank UNAOC for believing in our work for change".*
> *Benard Wakoli and Winnie Kinaro,*
> *Alumni of the Youth Solidarity Fund from Kenya.*

Thirty young civil society leaders of the UNAOC Alumni network from twenty-five countries were invited to share their experience as participants in UNAOC projects at the 7th UNAOC Global Forum. The session followed a TED-talk format during which Alumni showcased their professional achievements and demonstrated the concrete

impact of UNAOC programs at grassroots level. They described how their participation in UNAOC programs broadened their horizons and empowered them as civil society leaders and agents of change.

> *"Being part of the UNAOC Alumni gives me the opportunity to connect with so many inspiring people."*
> *Velma Saric,*
> *2014 Recipient of the Intercultural Innovation Award (IIA)*

Alumni unanimously welcomed the success and impact of UNAOC programs, which bring together young leaders and provide them with platforms and a network to foster inclusive societies and achieve sustainable development.

III. Project Activities

UNAOC programming is fashioned around its four pillars, namely education, youth, media and migration. Project activities are also developed in line with the global UN policies and strategies set by the Secretary General, and in accordance with priorities identified by UNAOC co-sponsors.

In 2016, a new project was developed under the framework of the implementation of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) and in accordance with UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015). The Young Peacebuilders programme was designed to support youth in gaining skills that will enhance the positive role they play in issues related to peace and security

1. Youth and Education

- **The Young Peacebuilders in West Africa**

> *"The YPWA program has much more to offer for West Africa and beyond. These recent weeks have informed me that themes on youth, peace and security are grey areas our societies should be informed of and certainly, youth are the key drivers."*
> *Participant, Young Peacebuilders in West Africa 2016*

To complement and expand programming for young people, UNAOC decided to offer peace educational opportunities at the regional level targeting youth aged 18-25. In doing so, UNAOC contributes to the development of skills and competence of emerging young leaders. The Young Peacebuilders supports young people who are working on issues related to peace and security, and empowering them so that they can contribute to peacebuilding in their respective countries. The project also seeks to provide more visibility to youth-led initiatives in the field of conflict prevention and the promotion of diversity and human rights. As such, it responds to recent

international policy recommendations outlined in UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism.

The pilot edition of UNAOC's Young Peacebuilders was launched on International Youth Day 2016. For its first iteration, the Alliance chose to focus on West Africa. The project was implemented in partnership with relevant actors at the regional level and among civil society, particularly the UNAOC network of young Alumni. Implementing partners included the United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY Peacebuilders), and the Economic Commission for West African States (ECOWAS).

Through a competitive call for applications, 20 young men and women from 11 countries in West Africa were selected among more than 450 applicants to take part in the program. The group was balanced in terms of gender and reflected diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

The programme was developed following an innovative methodology consisting of three distinct phases. The first phase was a seven-week online phase, including curriculum on issues related to peacebuilding, PVE and the promotion of diversity and social inclusion. The second phase was a one-week workshop in Abuja (Nigeria) during 20-26 November 2016. The third phase consisted of a three-month follow-up phase aiming at implementing the outcomes and recommendations.

The main outcomes of the workshop were the consolidation of the network and the creation of individual action plans. These plans outlined specific actions to be undertaken by participants in the following months. The action included specific activities to benefit their respective organizations and advance intercultural dialogue and peacebuilding in their communities, thus increasing their contribution as agents of peace.

The youth participants provided very positive feedback on the project suggesting that the programme was successful in reaching its objectives. This was the first of a series of educational opportunities that UNAOC intends to implement in different regions of the world with a growing coalition of partners.

- **The Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF)**

> *"It was the opportunity to reflect on how these stories of success, these lessons learned in leading organizations, could be used in our country, culture and organization, in order to better support more people."*
> *Bijeysh Ranjit, "3D Project: Dialogue, debate and discussion", implemented by SAATH, Nepal*

In 2016, the UNAOC Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF) continued its support to youth-led organizations by funding 5 projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa. This segment of YSF was implemented through support from the Government of Finland and concluded the 2015-2016 edition, during which a total of 11 organizations were funded.

Five organizations from the MENA and Sub-Saharan African regions received a grant (up to USD 25,000) as well as technical support to implement projects. All projects selected advance UNAOC's mandate in promoting intercultural dialogue and social inclusion. The projects implemented in Cameroon, Nigeria and the State of Palestine focused on improving intercultural relationships through online citizen journalism, social media and radio; engaging internally displaced persons and faith-based organizations; and training for tolerance and collaboration between groups of different faiths and cultures. More than 450,000 people benefitted from these activities.

The projects also engaged youth from diverse backgrounds, including faith groups, university students, youth councils and other youth-led organizations, bloggers, journalists, and internally displaced young people (IDPs). The selected organizations sought to address tensions and fears between identity groups affected by conflict in the Middle East, the spread of violent extremism, and other related issues. One project involved Arab and Israeli youth from across the Middle East. Other projects addressed the Anglophone/Francophone divide in Cameroon, mistrust of Muslim IDPs in Nigeria, and migrants from neighboring countries in Cameroon. Projects were designed to provide tools and spaces for constructive dialogue and collaboration, attitude shifts and the dissemination of alternatives to violence.

As part of the technical support, UNAOC organized a capacity building workshop for recipient organizations of the 2015-2016 YSF iteration. The workshop consolidated best practices and lessons learned from project implementation. It supported the sustainability of youth-led initiatives through skills enhancement, dissemination of project results and networking for partnership and solidarity. The training was held at the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa on 24-28 October 2016. The training focused on the following topics: a) gender mainstreaming b) organizational development and change, c) monitoring and evaluation, d) fundraising and partnerships development, e) communicating results, f) mainstreaming and sharing best practices.

Throughout the workshop, participants were encouraged to reflect on and formulate the best practices of their projects. They showcased the success and expertise of young people working to advance intercultural dialogue. They also highlighted the importance of providing increasing funding and technical support to youth-led organizations working in this field.

YSF Best Practices:

(1) Engage diverse youth in intergenerational programming that works on preventing violence rather than addressing post-conflict situations at the community level.

"We engaged diverse youth, a practice that is not common in Pakistan. And we engaged them in an intergenerational program with local government, community and religious leaders. These youth were trained and formed community protection groups dedicated to changing attitudes of community members towards each other. Encouraged to embrace a culture of peace and tolerance, they worked on preventing violence rather than addressing post-conflict situations."
Samina Khan, "Building community resilience to prevent conflict", implemented by Organization for Community Development (Pakistan)

(2) Bringing together members and leaders of different faiths using dance and dialogue to promote acceptance, friendship and partnership.

"This is new in my community because the insurgency in the northern part of my country has displaced thousands of young Muslims into Christian communities, leading to increased tensions among the two groups. We pitched the idea of working together as one to promote peace after establishing with both groups that their religions were based on peace. We achieved this through intercultural events using dance and dialogue to pass on the messages."
Abiodun Rufus Unegbu, "Intercultural Learning for Peace", implemented by Leadership Initiative for Youth Empowerment (LIFE), Nigeria

- **The Fellowship Programme**

"I believe that deeper insight into the complexities of the MENA region would help decipher any biases that I may hold against this area while gaining greater knowledge of the Arab and Muslim world."
Trent Lawrence, U.S.A

"I believe that it is everybody's duty to build bridges between cultures. Knowing more about other cultures through dialogue is the best way to strengthen ties between countries."
Mustafa Al Soufi, Yemen

The UNAOC Fellowship Programme enables young professionals and civil society leaders from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and their counterparts from Europe and North America (EUNA) to learn from one another and address issues related to intercultural understanding and interfaith dialogue.

The 2016 iteration of the Fellowship focused on "Education as a tool for the prevention of radicalization and xenophobia." UNAOC appreciates the financial assistance of Germany and Spain, as well as the support of Morocco, Egypt, Qatar and the League of Arab States, who made this project possible. Participants selected for their professional achievements in the field of education traveled to the United States, Germany, France, Spain, Morocco, Egypt, and Qatar. During their travels, they met with representatives of international organizations, government officials, and religious leaders. They also met a wide range of journalists, NGO representatives, think tanks and civil society actors involved in education and in the prevention of radicalization and xenophobia.

Prior and at the end of the trip, UNAOC conducted surveys to assess the impact of the programme on participants and measure the evolution of their perceptions. The results were very encouraging and revealed that the programme contributed to a change in the participants' perceptions of "the other" and the deconstruction of stereotypes.

UNAOC and the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN invited 15 Fellowship Alumni to share good practices and recommendations on preventing radicalization and xenophobia through education. The recommendations presented were supportive of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism as well as the UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015).

2. Media and Migration

- **The #SpreadNoHate Initiative**

This initiative was launched on December 2015 with a first Symposium held at the UN Headquarters in New York. During 2016, the #SpreadNoHate Initiative continued to bring together journalists and media experts from around the world to address the increase of hate speech in the media.

The Alliance organized its second #SpreadNoHate Symposium in Baku (Azerbaijan) during the 7th UNAOC Global Forum on 25-27 April 2016. The panel discussion was an opportunity to raise the spread of hatred narratives in the media with journalists and media practitioners. They shared various perspectives, opinions, and best practices on countering hate speech and cyber terrorism. During this panel, speakers first assessed the phenomenon and its different manifestations, especially on social media platforms. They also addressed the role of media literacy and online human-rights education in countering hate speech. A key finding was that teaching users, especially younger generations, to develop inclusive dialogue and appropriate tools online to react to

hateful content is crucial in combating hate speech. The session concluded that focusing solely on technology and platforms used to spread narratives of hatred and mistrust would not be sufficient in countering hate speech.

The third Symposium held on the margins of the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly focused on "Combating xenophobic language in the media and fostering inclusive integration of migrants and refugees". It was organized in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and co-sponsored by the European Union (EU) and the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Malta to the United Nations. In line with the United Nations global initiative against racism and xenophobia, "Together: respect, safety and dignity for all," the symposium provided a platform for discussions on the preparation of the UNGA High Level Summit on refugees and migrants. It served as an opportunity for media experts, UN Officials, and representatives of Member States, and NGOs to address the treatment of migrants and refugees in the media. It also addressed the increase of xenophobic rhetoric in the media. The side event resulted in the formulation of concrete recommendation to prevent and counter hate speech towards migrants and refugees and foster their integration in host societies.

The recommendations will be included in the final #SpreadNoHate policy report to be issued in 2017. Over 120 people, including several representatives of Member States and NGOs attended the symposium. The discussion was also broadcast live on UN Web TV and reached close to 500,000 people online globally with the UNAOC hashtag #SpreadNoHate.

Discussions are underway to organize to organize the fourth Symposium in partnership with the European Union in Brussels in 2017.

> *"Digital platforms are proliferating hate speech faster and wider than anyone could have imagined."*
> *Susan Sachs at the #SpreadNoHate Symposium*
> *during the 7th UNAOC Global Forum*

> *"The degree to which media reflects a single kind of homogeneous perspective becomes really problematic as the country and the entire world becomes more global. We need diverse newsrooms."*
> *Damien Cave, Deputy National Editor for Digital,*
> *The New York Times*

- **PLURAL+, The Youth Video Festival On Migration, Diversity and Social Inclusion**

> *"Attending PLURAL+ has been an eye-opening experience that I cherish dearly. Your award has highly motivated me in pursuing to produce better films, and I'm sure it does for the others too."*

Pierre Chin Ho Ieong, France

In 2016, PLURAL+ celebrated its 8th anniversary. The youth video festival on migration, diversity and social inclusion was developed and implemented by UNAOC in close cooperation with IOM. As of December 2016, the festival was supported by over 50 partner organizations that contributed through in-kind resources and expertise. The partners also provided opportunities for distribution and outreach for PLURAL+ award winning videos.

Through the year, PLURAL+ videos were presented at numerous venues around the world, including: MICE (International Program of Educational Cinema) Festival (Valencia, Spain), European Parliament (Brussels), COPEAM (Permanent Conference of the Audiovisual Mediterranean Operators) (Ajaccio, France), Tribeca Film Festival (New York), Insight Film Festival (London), FilmAid Festival (Kenya), Hamptons Film Festival (USA), Royal Film Commission of Jordan, CHIHN India Festival (New Delhi, India).

In 2016, over 300 applicants from 69 countries sent their videos, out of which an international jury, including partner organizations, selected 27 finalists. The selected videos were presented at PLURAL+ awards ceremony at the Paley Centre for Media, in New York, on 27 October 2017.

- **MEDIA INFORMATION LITERACY (MIL)**

  - **MIL publications**

In October 2016, UNAOC presented its new publication "Opportunities for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa" at the Jordanian Media Institute, in Amman (Jordan). Published in English and Arabic, the book features articles of 10 experts from the MENA region. A result of the collaboration of UNAOC, UNESCO and NORDICOM, this publication aims at facilitating information and resources to MENA region educators interested in learning more about MIL. It also brings MIL topics to their students and centers of education.

In November 2016, the Alliance presented the UNESCO-UNAOC publication on "Media and Information Literacy: Reinforcing Human Rights, Countering Radicalization and Extremism". The book was presented at the occasion of the UNESCO-UNITWIN-UNAOC annual conference on the Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue held at Sao Paulo University in Brazil.

  - **MIL clearinghouse**

UNAOC's MIL clearinghouse was developed in partnership with UNESCO. It has become the unique thematic digital platform on media and information literacy within the United Nations system. In May 2016, UNAOC upgraded its

website with a new design and improved navigation. The site has currently over 6,000 registered users.

- **MIL teacher curriculum website**

UNAOC and UNESCO worked closely on developing the web-based version of UNESCO's Teachers Curriculum on MIL, to be launched in 2017. The website will provide access to an international, multimedia and multi-language MIL teaching resources tool for educators, researchers and individuals. The tool contains interactive and intercultural teaching resources proposed for use in formal and non-formal educational settings.

- **MIL conferences and events**

Through 2016, UNAOC actively participated in several conferences on MIL, including the "Media and Learning Conference" co-organized by the European Commission and held in March in Brussels. At this occasion, UNAOC presented a paper on MIL and the Prevention of Violent Extremism. In June 2016, the Alliance took part in a conference co-organized by Google Latin-American and the OEI held in Buenos Aires (Argentina). UNAOC presented a policy paper on the role of MIL in the framework of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education. In November 2016, UNAOC participated on several panel discussions on MIL. These included the annual meeting of the global network of universities, the UNESCO-UNITWIN-UNAOC Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue, and the UNESCO-UNITWIN-UNAOC annual conference on the Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue held at Sao Paulo University in Brazil. In addition, the Alliance organized three sessions on MIL related topics during the 7th UNAOC Global Forum in Baku (Azerbaijan).

3. Promoting intercultural dialogue and peace through innovation

- **Intercultural Innovation Award (IIA)**

Since its launch in 2011, the BMW Intercultural Innovation Award (IIA) continued to encourage the development of innovative and sustainable projects to promote dialogue and intercultural understanding to achieve prosperity and peace around the world.

During the 7th UNAOC Global Forum in Baku from 25-27 April 2016, UNAOC and the BMW Group awarded grants to 10 projects dealing with issues related to youth, migration and integration, intercultural awareness, gender, education, arts, media and IT. The awardees came from Brazil, Bulgaria, France, Germany, India, Israel, Kenya, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. In addition to grants totaling USD 100,500, UNAOC and BMW Group provided technical support to the awardees.

This support included training and capacity-building programs, customized support and mentoring, tailored-made webinars, recognition, visibility and membership to an exclusive alumni network.

In addition to the 10 awardees, 31 alumni belong to the Intercultural Innovation Award network, making a total of 41 organizations since 2011. Impact of alumni was measured through an assessment exercise at the end of 2016. It was noted that 29 out of 31 alumni organizations consolidated their work since receiving the Award. There have been successful replication processes in some cases and expansion in others, with this growth being both geographical and in the number of beneficiaries. The number of countries impacted by the work of the awarded organizations increased by 154% (from 39 to 99). Similarly, the beneficiaries increased to almost 1.5 million.

Furthermore, a capacity building workshop, including a webinar on fundraising, covering topics related to strategic planning and effective communication was organized in Munich (Germany) in December 2016. Another capacity building workshop focusing on monitoring, evaluation as well as organizational development and sustainability is being planned to take place in Gurgaon (India) in February 2017.

Focus On The UNAOC-BMW Group Capacity Building Workshop for Recipients Of The 2016 Intercultural Innovation Award (IIA)

The first capacity building workshop for 10 recipients of the 2016 Intercultural Innovation Award focused on the areas of strategic communication and effective planning. Hosted by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the BMW Group, the workshop took place at BMW Group Headquarters in Munich, Germany from 27 June to 1 July 2016.

Awardees from Brazil, Bulgaria, France, Germany, India, Israel, Kenya, the United Kingdom and the United States of America participated in the workshop. The various training sessions were designed to build their capacity with a view to enhance the long-term effect and sustainability of their projects so that their initiative can expand and replicate in other contexts. The first part of the event focused on effective planning, where attendees used management tools and experiential group learning to develop a business model for their organizations. The second part of the workshop concentrated on communications. Attendees received training on public speaking and media and got the chance to perform in front of cameras within a television studio setting.

The highlight of the workshop was the opportunity for awardees to interact with BMW Group managers, with a simulation of a pitch to potential sponsors. Awardees were asked to "sell" their own projects and received invaluable feedback from BMW Group employees.

The training in Munich was part of the one-year support programme provided to finalists of the IIA. Thus, the Award selects highly innovative grassroots and sustainable projects of non-profit organizations that promote dialogue and intercultural understanding, while making vital contributions to prosperity and peace in global societies.

- **PEACEapp : Fostering Integration Of Refugees**

In 2016, UNAOC redesigned the original PeaceApp framework, a global challenge for gamified apps and video games supporting intercultural dialogue. The PeaceApp is now enabling the development and implementation of a series of hands on video games design workshops involving young refugees and youth from the host countries. The initiative facilitates social inclusion of refugees in new communities and provides a platform for intercultural dialogue. By offering digital literacy competencies, including learning basic digital game design, the PeaceApp also contributes to support refugees and participants searching for a job and applying for professional opportunities. In addition, the PeaceApp workshops provide young refugees and local youth with a space very conducive for discussion, social interaction and cultural understanding.

In a country such as Kenya challenged with integrating urban refugees into its social and cultural fabric, the PeaceApp can help urban refugee youth to become more connected to their communities. This, in turn, can promote their inclusion in community-building and social integration.

In this context, in August 2016, UNAOC, in partnership with the Nairobi Play Project and with UNHCR's collaboration, supported a series of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) development workshops. These workshops targeted urban refugees, originally from Eritrea and Ethiopia, and local Kenyan youth, providing them with peace building skills and technical abilities.

IV. Administrative Issues

1. UNAOC Trust Fund and Fundraising

For the 2016 budgetary year, actual expenditures were kept at the level of up to USD 3.9 Million. The High Representative's efforts to further stabilize and increase the level of replenishment of the Voluntary Trust Fund continued in 2016. He called upon the Members of Group of Friends to continue to support the Alliance of Civilizations Voluntary Trust Fund during the regular GoF meetings.

Support to the Voluntary Trust Fund was enhanced during the course of 2016 with sufficient funding status to begin 2017 programming and ensure staffing needs. While this net increase is laudable, concerns remain about the timing of donations as cash flow issues can constrain programming. UNAOC High Representative is exploring new ways of expanding the pool of donors for specific project activities.

2. Staffing

Staffing remained constant during the reporting period. Fiscal prudence and cash flow issues demand that UNAOC maintains budget discipline and seeks cost savings wherever possible.